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1871-09-08

**Letter from [John Muir] to [Jeanne C.] Carr, [1871] Sep 8.**

John Muir

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<sup>(43)</sup>  
upper rocks only three days &  
am hungry for exercise already

Prof. Runklee, President of the  
Boston Institute of Technology was  
here last week & I preached my  
glacial theory to him for five  
days taking him into the canons  
of the valley & up among the grand  
glacier wombs & pathways of the  
summit. He was fully con-  
vinced of the truth of my readings  
& urged me to write out the  
glacial system of Yosemite &  
its tributaries for the Boston  
Academy of Science. I told  
him that I meant to write  
my thoughts for my own use  
& that I would send him the  
manuscript & if he & his wise  
& scientific brothers thought it  
of sufficient interest they  
might publish it.

He is going to send me some  
instruments & I mean to go over  
all the glacier basins carefully,  
working until driven down by the  
snow

# 74.

(17)

[1871]

Yosemite Sep 8<sup>th</sup>

Dearest friend Mrs. Can

I am sorry that King made  
you uneasy about me. He does  
not understand me as you do & you  
must not heed him so much. He thinks that  
I am melancholy & above all that I require  
polishing... I feel sure that if you were  
here to see how happy I am & how ardently  
I am seeking a knowledge of the rocks.  
You could not call me away but would  
gladly let me <sup>go</sup> with only God & his written  
rocks to guide me. You would not  
think of calling me to make machines  
or a home, or of rubbing me against other  
minds, or of setting me up for measurement.  
No dear friend. You would say "Keep  
your mind untrammelled & pure. Go  
unfrictioned - unmeasured & God  
give you the true meaning &  
interpretation of his mountains."

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You know that for the last three years I have been floodingly making observations about this valley & the high mountain region to the East of it - drifting broodingly about - & taking in every natural lesson that I was fitted to absorb. In particular the great valley has always kept a place in my mind. How did the Lord make it - ? What tools did he use? How did he apply them & when? I considered the sky above it - & all of its opening canons, & studied the forces that came in by every door that I saw standing open. But - I could get - no light. Then I said "You are attempting what is not-possible for you to accomplish. Yosemite is the end of a grand chapter - if you would learn to read it - go commence at the beginning." Then I went - above to the alphabet valleys of the summits comparing canon with

Canon with all their varieties of rock structure & cleavage & the comparative size & slope of the glaciers & waters wh. they contained. Also the grand congregations of rock creations was present - to me & I studied their forms & sculpture. I even had a key to every Yosemite rock & perpendicular & sloping wall. The grandeur of these forces & their glorious results overpowered me & inhabit - my whole being, waking or sleeping I have no rest. In dreams I read blurred sheets of glacial writing or follow lines of cleavage or struggle with the difficulties of some extraordinary rock form. Now it - is clear that woe is me if I do not drown this tendency towards nervous prostration by constant labor in working up the details of this whole question. I have been down from the



Libby sent me Tyndall's new book & have looked hastily over it. It is an alpine mixture of very pleasant taste & I wish I could enjoy reading & talking it with you. I expect Mrs H. will accompany her husband to the East this winter & then will not be one left with whom I can exchange a thought. Mrs H. is going to leave me out all the books I want & Tomlinson is going to send me Darwin, these with my notes & maps will fill my winter hours. if my eyes do not fail & now that you see my whole position I think that you would not call me to the excitements & distracting novelties of civilization.

This bread question is very troublesome. I will eat anything you think will suit me send up either by express to ~~the~~ Big Oak Flat or by any other chance & I will remit the money required in any way you like

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In winter I can make my drawings & maps & write sub-notes. So you see that for a year or two I will be very busy. I have settled with Hutchings & have no dealings with him now. I think that next spring I will have to guide a month or two for pocket-money although I do not like the work. I suppose I might live for one or two seasons without work. I have five hundred dollars here & I have been sending home money to my sisters & brothers perhaps about twelve or fifteen hundred & a man in Canada owes me three or four hundred dollars more which I suppose I could get - if I was in need but you know that the Scotch do not like to spend their cash dollar some of my friends are badgering me to write

for some of the magazines & I am almost tempted to try it, only I am afraid that this would distract my mind from my main work more than the distasteful & depressing labor of the mill or of grinding. What do you think about it?

Suppose I should give some of the journals my first thoughts about this glacier work as I go along & afterwards gather them & press them for the Boston wise. Or will it be better to hold my wheeler & say it all at a breath.

You see how practical I have become & how fully I have burdened you with my little affairs.

Perhaps you will ask "What plan are you going to pursue in your work?" Well, here it is - the only book I ever have invented. First I will describe

each glacier with its tributaries separately, then describe the rocks & hills & mountains over which they have flowed or past - which they have flowed. endeavoring to prove that all of the various forms which these rocks now have is the necessary result of the ice action in connection with their structure & cleavage etc. Also the different kinds of canons & lake basins & meadows which they have made. Then armed with this data I will come down to Yosemite where all of my ice has come & prove that each dome & brow & wall, & every grace & spire & brother is the necessary result of the delicately balanced blows of well directed & combined glaciers against the parent rocks which contained them, only thinly carved & moulded in some instances by the subsequent action of water etc.